Clay Geerdes **COMIX WAVE 158**
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GERALD RUBIN
[1938-1994]

"For us as a generation, the courtroom and jails may be becoming more important than the universities. We are outlaws, enemies of the state. Our enemy owns the police, the courts, the jails. We are no freer than the poorest black woman or man in the darkest jail.

–Jerry Rubin
We Are Everywhere, 1971

Jerry Rubin died Monday evening, November 28, 1994, at the UCLA Medical Center. Born July 14, 1938, in Cincinnati, Ohio, Jerry showed up in Berkeley in the spring of 1965 to form the Vietnam Day Committee. Jerry had a great sense of humor and a flair for happenings. He was a genius at street theater and a fine orator. He would have been a good Mayor for Berkeley had he won in 1967. Run down jaywalking across the street in front of his Brentwood home, I suspect Jerry would have enjoyed the absurdity of his end. We met numerous times over the years and I always enjoyed the short conversations I had with him. During his activist period, he came to Sonoma State College where I was teaching and spoke to the student body. I think he told everyone what a shuck organized education was and suggested the best thing to do was burn down the college and get on with life. It was all part of his public persona at the time. Almost from day one when the media learned Jerry was fast with a sound bite, cameras followed him around. He enjoyed it and he seldom let them down. At the Human Be-In in Golden Gate Park on January 14, 1967, monstrous gathering of the tribes which included all the popcult intellectuals of the time, Tim Leary, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Lenore Kandel, and umpteen others, Rubin showed up in a Revolutionary soldier's uniform. The crowd wasn't up for any political speeches and I think all Leary said was "Turn on, tune in, and drop out of all social games," while Rubin just smiled and waved at the huge crowd from center stage. 'Twas not the time to talk, not with the Quicksilver Messenger Service and the Sopwith Camel and the Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead and a dozen other bands waiting to play. Ginsberg was into his East Indian trip, playing his harmonium and chanting mantras. Snyder was writing about American Indians and retribalization in the San Francisco ORACLE and Lenore Kandel had just been busted for the openly expressed sexual poetry in her LOVE BOOK. Rubin was just one of the players in that incredible scene, but he always held his own. We were at a party one evening at the Great American Music Hall. Jim and Artie Mitchell [May you rest in peace, Artie.] were throwing the party for Georgina Spelvin and Linda Lovelace and I think it was a promo for THE DEVIL IN MS. JONES, but there were so many parties in those days, who remembers; anyway Robert Opel had just streaked the academy awards that April and streaking had become faddist around the Bay Area so Jerry Rubin and Roger May stripped and streaked the party.

That's the Jerry Rubin I remember. I wasn't in Chicago for fiasco of 1968, but I followed the trial of the Chicago 7 with a great deal of interest; most of us considered it kind of a last hurrah for the American Establishment; of course, in subsequent years corporate power assimilated the media into a few easily controlled conglomerates, but we still don't believe that corporate bullshit and Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman had a lot to do with debunking and tearing the mask off the beast with one republican and one democratic head.

Jerry's book DO IT is one of the classics of the sixties and I am sure it will go on inspiring people. If you can't find this book and you'd like to read some of Jerry's best stuff, check out his articles in the Berkeley BARB, or his WE ARE EVERYWHERE [New York: Harper and Row, 1971] or his autobiography GROWING UP AT 37. The Berkeley public library maintains a microfilm collection of the BARB and other underground newspapers. Jerry wrote for the BARB off and on from late 1965 through 1969. Unlike a lot of his peers, Jerry made a good living in the last years of his life. He marketed a product that sold well and got the only thing capitalism has to give, material wealth. Some say he sold out, but I never knew Rubin the latterday businessman, the networker; I knew the social gadfly, the clown, the guy who had no patience with the serious face of fascism, and I'm glad I knew him.

This afternoon I stopped by a rally of veterans of the 1964 Free Speech Movement in Sproul Plaza on the University of California campus in Berkeley. Mario Savio was speaking about the recent passage of a bill to tighten up on immigration laws as "creeping fascism," while down the concrete steps past Ludwig's fountain a cacaphonic punk band was whining away in front of Zellerbach Hall. It was Friday, December 2, 1994, and the occasion was the 30th anniversary of the FSM. Lots of folks hugging and enjoying the sun. Old activists and well-seasoned hippies infiltrated by blue-clad cops on bicycles and a handful of yuppie scum; ah, you would have loved it, Jerry.

Claudia Johnson became upset back in 1986 when she heard the local school board had voted to ban LYSISTRATA and Chaucer's MILLER'S TALE. She went to see the Principal of the high school and he pushed a page of the MILLER'S TALE in her face and said "Ain't you think that's ponography?" Overwhelmed by the staggering intellect before her, Johnson left and filed a lawsuit against the school board. She was joined by two other women from her home town of Lake City, Florida. The story of her five year fight against illiteracy is told in STIFLED LAUGHTER [Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum, 1994]. The account of the trial is hilarious. Johnson found few people who had read a complete book and learned that censors are seldom readers. A typical sign in front of a Lake City church proclamined: *FEAR IS THE DARKROOM WHERE SATAN TAKES YOU TO DEVELOP YOUR NEGATIVES.*

Whatever happened to Country Joe and the Fish? Well, Joe McDonald is still around Berkeley and on November 25, he put together a reunion concert with the other members of his group. They would be: Barry Melton, now a district attorney in Ukiah California; David Cohen, a computer programmer working on Wall Street in New York; Bruce Barthol, who works with the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and Chicken Hirsch who designs and sells t-shirts in Ashland Oregon, where he has lived the past 20 years.

I was almost run down by a guy with a Christmas wreath on the front of the radiator of his little green MG--does that mean we're in for a good year? What about Joanie and the Slashettes singing SEX on an old MARRIED WITH CHILDREN or that little black kid in a turkey costume singing "Eat me" in ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES or the escalating popularity of James Carrey who grossed everyone out with his talking asshole act in ACE VENTURA, PET DETECTIVE--does it look like we're in for a good future? I watched a debate on FIRING LINE, presumably about the Women's Movement [as though this were a single entity instead of a collection of groups with goals that differ as much as the various pressure groups organized and controlled by men], and all it did was remind me what a facile snot Bill Buckley is. Did I learn anything about any aspect of the various groups within the women's movement? No. Did I hear a word about the real history of women in America? No. Did I see Betty Friedan take credit for being "the mother of the women's movement." Yes. Which is a joke, huh? Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN in 1792 in England and in America, Amelia Bloomer and Elizabeth Cady Stanton attended the first Women's Congress in 1848, so who is Betty Friedan to take credit for anything but her book THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE [1963]? Those PBS debates always irritate the hell out of me. Who are those people? Mostly the rich with their classist view of the world, badmouthing the poor as though they were responsible for the poverty, crime, and violence. No one said a word about drugs or alcohol. I hear one political party blame the other for the rise in crime, for teenage abortions, for domestic violence, but the rich are to blame and they never accept their guilt. Poor people didn't move any factories to Taiwan and Thailland so products can be assembled by slave labor. Poor people didn't set up the network that now imports tons of cocaine into this country from Bolivia and Peru via Columbia and Florida and Kentucky. Poor people don't own the major media that broadcast disinformation and infotainment designed to pit race against race, nationality against nationality. One can only laugh at Camile Paglia's diatribe against an Eastern "liberal media." The New York TIMES and Washington POST are owned by billionaires and speak with the voice of an international conglomerate. Paglia is a flake who takes whatever side pleases her at the time, a writer more contradictory than Walt Whitman. Oriana Huffington was the perfect representative of the arrogance of wealth yelling at Betty Friedan to shut up. Huffington dictated her canned remarks to the camera and paid no attention to the comments of the other women, running off the mouth about "volunteerism" and a "return to community." A woman reminded her that all of the women's crisis centers and day care centers were using volunteer help, but the Queen bee was deaf to it all. *What she means by community is a return to slavery; that poor people in this country should be happy for a chance to serve the rich without pay and certainly without the group support of any trade union.* The right to abort unwanted babies is critical to those who want the right to control their lives because an unwanted pregnancy is the end of a woman's freedom. There was no discussion of this issue on the program, just a lot of yelling. It's going to be a war between the rich who can afford to have babies and the poor whose chances of survival are ruined by them. Only those who know the facts can make choices, yet those who advocate teaching these facts are often fired--ask Jocelyn Elders.

SCOOP NISKER WRITES A MEMOIR

Clay Geerdes

Scoop Nisker tells his version of what happened in the sixties in **IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE NEWS...GO OUT AND MAKE SOME OF YOUR OWN.** This is a top of the head memoir which reveals Nisker's wit, not a documented historical document. I'll give you one example. Nisker wrote: *In the summer of that year [1969], it leaked out that the University of California was going to put a parking lot of a vacant square of land adjacent to the counterculture enclave of Telegraph Avenue. Hippies and radicals decided they wanted to preserve this bit of nature, so they planted a garden, set up benches, and began calling it People's Park. Although no one recognized it at the time, this was one of the early skirmishes of the environmental movement* [55]. Well, sorry, Scoop, but this is what actually happened. Ron Delacour, who owned the Red Square, a little clothing store, looked out at the lot behind the Med on Telegraph and thought it might be nice to have a free rock concert out there, featuring the Joy of Cooking, a band popular in Berkeley at the time. He talked to Max Scheer about this and a few other people began to jam on the idea. On April 13, Max promoted the idea of a People's Park in the Berkeley BARB and folks were invited to come and plant some flowers. On April 20, the park became a reality when over 200 people came. They cleaned the place up, raked it, landscaped it, planted some trees and flowers, put in some kid's playground equipment and a few benches, and the park was a reality. Until the Chancellor's office got wind of what was going on and Assistant Chancellor Earl Cheit decided something had to be done to reclaim the property from the poachers. That was done suddenly on the morning of May 15, 1969, when UC and Berkeley police took the park back, putting up a chain link fence. Governor Reagan called in the National Guard, but he was only able to do so legally because Berkeley was already in a state of emergency from a campus strike by the Third World Liberation Front in early March. Scoop should recall that Hippies and Radicals were at the opposite end of the spectrum in the sixties and did not cooperate. Hippies dropped out and got stoned. Radicals had a political agenda. Environmentalists from the College of Environmental Design at UC were involved in the park from the beginning and everyone around Berkeley knew quite well that the park was an environmental issue. Cliff Humphries of Ecology Action created the first People's Park in mid-1968 at the corner of Dwight and Telegraph where a friend of his suffered in an accident. The idea was his, and the park initiated by Delacour, Wendy Schlesinger, John Read, and others was a continuation of Humphries' idea, not theirs. UC had no plan to put a parking lot in that area in 1969. People parked there when it wasn't too muddy, so it was already partially a parking lot. UC didn't try to pave it until 1972, then the paving was broken up by Park protectors. Various radical groups did try to use People's Park for their own purposes, but this was after the fact. The reader is referred to Robert Scheer's detailed day to day coverage of the Park war in RAMPARTS, to UC sociology prof Todd Gittlin's chronological commentary in THE SIXTIES, and to Tom Hayden's political interpretation in REUNION [he sneaked into the area and observed after it was in progress and had nothing to do with the initial plan.]; my own coverage of the event appeared in the Los Angeles FREE PRESS for three successive weeks in May of 1969.

Keep up with what's going on at the WORDS & PICTURES museum through the WORDS ABOUT PICTURES newsletter. $2 for a sample from 140 Main St. Northampton, MA 01060.

Cases are won or lost, not on the truth, but by the preponderance of perjury uttered by witnesses on the stand, who lie with impunity and then walkaway. This is most true on the criminal side.

Steve Martini
COMPELLING EVIDENCE.
New York: Berkley Books, 1993, p. 386.

KOKOSHKA is $2.50 pp from Bruce Stengl, POB 401, Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0401.